



TOWN of TOLLAND/ 21 tolland green, tolland connecticut 06084

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February 23, 2009

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee

To our legislators;

The Town of Tolland Human Services has been fortunate in having Connecticut Legal Services as a resource for our low-income residents and for ourselves. We urge the Appropriations Committee to seriously consider an alternative funding mechanism to support the ongoing efforts of this nonprofit organization that serves our most vulnerable residents.

As you are aware, several years ago the legislature set up IOLTA as the prime funding source for this very essential program. Unfortunately this innovative funding has been dramatically reduced as a result of the economic devastation to the real estate market. This leaves legal aid facing budget cuts and layoffs, just at a time when our low-income residents need their services more than ever. Our justice system is a right that should be available for all citizens, but without legal aid, low-income citizens have no way of accessing this right. We have seen firsthand the difference that Connecticut Legal Services has made in the lives of residents.

This year the legislature faces so many challenges and we greatly respect the difficulty in the decisions that you will be required to make. One decision that will prove to be advantageous for so many residents living at the poverty level will be your decision to supplement funding for Legal Services. Residents who use legal aid services are those whose faces are often not seen and voices not heard. They live in every Connecticut community and face the daily struggle of trying to provide just the basic needs for their families and children. They are faced with a multitude of limitations; lack of legal representation should be added to that list.

Sincerely,

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